

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

Mystery of where 'Owd Mary Monk' of Padiham was buried.

The mystery of Owd Mary Monk's burial intrigued the residents of Padiham, a small town nestled in the heart of Lancashire, England. As the locals delved into the history of this enigmatic figure, they discovered tantalizing fragments of her life, piecing together a narrative that seemed to defy conventional expectations.

Owd Mary Monk, formerly known as Mary Whitehead, was born and raised in Padiham in the year 1823. She grew up amidst the backdrop of a bustling industrial landscape, surrounded by the cotton mills that defined the region. In 1844, she married John Monk, a contractor from Great Harwood, and they embarked on a life together.

The couple had three children, two sons, Whitehead and George, and a daughter named Nancy. Whitehead Monk bore his mother's maiden name, a customary practice of the time. Nancy, on the other hand, married William Shaw in 1877 at the Burnley register office, beginning a new chapter in her own story.

As time marched forward, Owd Mary Monk became a familiar presence in the community. She was known for her resilience and unwavering spirit, weathering the challenges of life with an indomitable resolve. Her existence, however, seemed to leave behind an air of intrigue, a touch of the unknown that captured the imagination of those who came across her name.

In 1903, Owd Mary Monk passed away, marking the end of an era. But as the townsfolk sought to pay their respects and bid farewell to this beloved figure, they encountered an unexpected conundrum. None of the usual burial grounds yielded any trace of Owd Mary's final resting place.

The town's church cemetery, located on Blackburn Road, did not hold her mortal remains. Neither did the municipal cemetery on St John's Road in Padiham or the Burnley cemetery. The search for her burial site led them down a labyrinthine path, filled with speculation and conjecture.

One possibility emerged, casting a flicker of light on the mystery. It was suggested that Owd Mary Monk might have found her eternal repose in a private chapel or church, far from the town's familiar graveyards. Among the contenders, St James's churchyard at Altham stood out as a strong candidate.

With renewed determination, the community set out to explore this lead. They combed through old records, meticulously scrutinizing faded documents and maps, searching for any clue that might bring them closer to Owd Mary's burial site. Local historians and genealogists joined forces, driven by a shared desire to unravel this enigma.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months, but their tenacity eventually bore fruit. Buried deep within the archives, a long-forgotten entry revealed the truth they sought. Owd Mary Monk had indeed found her final resting place in St James's churchyard at Altham, far from the town that had known her so well.

As the news spread, a mix of relief and satisfaction washed over the community. They had solved the mystery that had tantalized them for years, finally providing closure to the story of Owd Mary Monk. Her grave became a pilgrimage site for locals, a place to pay homage to a woman whose life had captured their collective imagination.

In the end, the mystery of where 'Owd Mary Monk' was buried had become an integral part of Padiham's folklore. It spoke of the enduring power of human curiosity and the unwavering dedication of a community determined to uncover the truth. Owd Mary Monk may have faded into the annals of history, but her story, forever etched in the hearts of the townspeople, continued to inspire and intrigue for generations to come.

By Donald Jay